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## Book Reviews.

**The Beginnings of Christianity.** By PROFESSOR PAUL WERNLE, University of Basel. Translated by G. A. BIENEMANN. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. Vol. I, 1903, pp. 389; Vol. II, 1904, pp. 376.

Whoever wishes to know the direction in which New Testament studies are now tending need only compare the classic *Life of Paul* by Conybeare and Howson, the *Apostolic Age* by Weizsäcker, and this recently translated work of Wernle. The difference between these books is not so much a matter of scholarship, for the oldest of the three books is easily the equal of the others in this particular; it rather lies in the method pursued by each. As contrasted with Weizsäcker, Wernle shows how large progress has been made during the last five years in the recognition of the Jewish elements in the New Testament, and more particularly does it disclose the new constructive stage into which theological scholarship has passed in the attempt to distinguish the inherited and formal elements of New Testament Christianity from its essential elements.

Professor Wernle is fortunately possessed of the historical rather than the analytico-literary temperament. His earlier works upon the synoptic problem show that he is master of that particular department of criticism which must underlie any study of the gospels, but his present work shows how far the spirit of the historian has overtopped that of the mere critic. In certain cases it could be wished that its effect had been even greater than it is. Professor Wernle has occasionally gone out of his way to minimize the historicity of some of the sayings and events of the gospels. As he does not provide his work with footnotes giving reasons for his decision, such dicta often appear arbitrary. But when allowance is made for this weakness, if it may so be designated, we have in his treatise that which, with Harnack's, is on the whole the most satisfactory piece of historical work on the apostolic age since the appearance of Weizsäcker's volumes.

Professor Wernle has really given us a study in biblical theology. The incidents of the life of Jesus and of Paul are all but overlooked. But biblical theology, as he handles it, is a matter of life, not of philosophy. He is really interested in seeing how the religious forces set in motion by Jesus finally precipitated themselves in the ecclesiastical era of the second century. The reader will naturally turn with most interest to his treatment

of the teaching of Jesus. His method here is that which it is to be hoped all biblical theology will sooner or later adopt—the discrimination between the form and the content of Jesus' teaching by the use of criteria given by the study of Judaism. Professor Wernle is convinced that the essential message of Jesus is eschatological. Its form and description were inherited by him from his contemporaries, with whom he shared the belief in demons and the certainty of the divine judgment day. Yet in the real contents of his message Jesus was a deliverer, not only from the penalty of the judgment day, but from the limitations of Judaism itself. Eschatological as his call is, it is the only one which could appeal to Jews and must appeal to all time. But its details are certainly not vital to the teaching of the Redeemer. The real gospel lies within them. Life is to be sanctified in view of an impending eternity. Conscientiousness, love, trust in a heavenly Father—these constitute the religious message of Jesus. But these, after all, have a result in a life which is in the true sense prophetic. Jesus as the Messiah had the spirit of God, and his followers were under the same divine influence.

It is from this point that Professor Wernle approaches the age of primitive christianity. Recognizing, as any historian must, that the first movement in Jerusalem was hardly more than a form of Judaism in its externals, he yet describes finally the great historical fact that there actually did appear a new religious life, a new power. As a message of Jesus had been a redemption, so the new life of the apostles was a redeemed life. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, and their conviction as to the near approach of eternity induced religious experiences such as are without parallel except in the case of the prophets.

This recognition of the Holy Spirit as the great factor in apostolic Christian life has never been expressed more clearly by recent writers, and in it we get the clue to the entire purpose of Wernle's work; viz., to establish the thesis that the outer form of Christianity was Jewish and temporal, while its real heart was a spiritual movement which does not depend upon the historic form, but may be lived in any age in accordance with the general intellectual life of the age. It is no mere chance that such a result should be so admirably expressed in the region of biblical theology, just as Sabatier emphasized it in the region of systematic theology.

If there is to be any serious criticism of Wernle's work outside of that already indicated, it lies in his treatment of Paul. He has at his disposition that which is really a key to Paulinism, viz., Christian faith as the acceptance of Jesus as Christ. In such a conviction and its presuppositions all Paulinism is implied. In view of this fact, Professor Wernle's discussion

seems a little off the track. At the same time, although he disregards messianism as a formative element in Paul's thought, his historical exegesis leads him to the heart of Paulinism; redemption through the life of the spirit induced by the acceptance of Jesus as Christ. Here again it is evident that he has disclosed a normative process. Paulinism, like the teaching of Jesus and the belief of the Jerusalem church, had in it the two sets of material—that devoted to exposition and that which is eternally true. Professor Wernle finds criteria a little too exclusively in the apologetic mood of Paul. Undoubtedly he is correct in saying that this purpose leads the apostle to overemphasize certain phenomena and to exclude other data which the modern mind must recognize. That is to say, Professor Wernle insists that, in order to show Christ to be the Redeemer of men, Paul feels himself compelled to prove universal guilt and the utter lack of any hope for the world except through the acceptance of the historical Jesus as Christ. Similarly, too, this apologetic purpose, as Professor Wernle holds, leads Paul at times to certain inconsistencies with some of his own teachings which are less controlled by apologetic interests. Now, few would deny that there is a large element of truth in this position of Professor Wernle in the case of Romans. Paul is certainly largely influenced by his systematic procedure. But assuredly Paulinism is not exclusively apologetic, and it is a fair question whether he would actually insist that guilt is universal.

Further, it is a mistake to consider, as Wernle does, that Paulinism is the generalization of the experience of Paul. His experience is only one of the two foci of the apostle's thought. The other is the genuinely messianic concept which Paul in the primitive church attached to the historical person Jesus. The failure to recognize this messianic element compels Professor Wernle to have recourse to that *deus ex machina*, Hellenism, when he comes to the discussion of the Christology of the later epistles. The conception of Jesus as the Son of God, he holds, came to Paul through the mythopoetic process. Thanks to this process, the Messiah became to the apostle a Greek Son of God, pre-existent, the creator of the world. It will be admitted by all that there is a development in the later Christology of the apostle; but it is hard to support the thesis that this development is due to any Greek mythopoetic process. A historical study of the term and concept of "Son of God" will certainly give pause to the acceptance of Professor Wernle's easy generalization. In the messianic concept there are implied all of the Christological concepts of Paul which are not implied by the facts of the historical Jesus. For this reason, if for no other, we cannot agree with Professor Wernle in finding inconsistencies in Pauline soteriology and Christology.

While Professor Wernle comes to the discussion of the later Christianity, his method is unchanged, but his interests are more concentrated upon the development of the church as an exponent of the divine life. Throughout the second volume of the translation, which is largely concerned with the Christianity of the latter part of the first century, his conclusions are less open to objections than in the above-mentioned aspects of Paulinism. Yet it is in this period also that his critical conceptions as to the origin of the gospels are much in evidence. With all recent scholars, he finds in them a large reflection of the thought of the later period. Whether all of his detailed conclusions in this particular are to be accepted is a matter of doubt, but there can be no question that he is right in his insistence that sub-apostolic Christianity is the struggle between the legislative inheritance of the church from Judaism and the free spiritual life of genuine Christianity.

It is to be hoped that this very insufficient review will show the importance of this work. No student of the New Testament can afford to neglect it. Whether or not he will agree with all its positions is a secondary matter. Professor Wernle has opened up the true method of study; and if his volume has no other effect than to impress upon biblical students the commanding position of eschatology in the gospel, it will not have been written in vain. The tendency for the last generation has been steadily toward the minimizing of those elements in the New Testament which are concerned with immortality. Christianity has been made increasingly an ethical system or bald mysticism, regardless of the very central thought of all the New Testament documents. The new movement in New Testament study, of which this volume is so distinguished a representative, will serve to correct this error. The details of eschatology, we can see now, may very properly be treated as Christianity's inheritance from Judaism. The fact of eternity, and its relations to the present life under the influence of this new school, are sure to play once more a larger and inevitable dynamic rôle in theology. In the first zeal of discovery both the method and its results may be over-emphasized, but in themselves they can be gainsaid only from *a priori* premises.

S. M.

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**The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning Explained.**

By JAMES WILLIAM THIRLTE. New York: Henry Frowde, 1904.  
Pp. viii + 386. \$2.

He is a bold, brave man who will tackle a problem that has outwitted the sages of centuries. Translators, textual critics, and exegetes have always been more or less baffled whenever they have attempted a solution of this knotty problem of the Psalter.